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NIMBY Greens policy endangers Victorian jobs and tropical rainforests

The peak representative body for the Victorian timber industry, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI), has criticised the Greens for targeting Victoria's sustainable native forest industry for destruction.

VAFI CEO Philip Dalidakis said the Greens policy to end the sustainable harvesting of native forests, announced at their national conference in Launceston on Saturday, would decimate the Victorian timber industry; which directly employs around 24,000 people and indirectly supports approximately another 50,000 jobs.

"The Greens policy announcement is all about NIMBY politics and winning votes, and has nothing to do with protecting the environment," Mr Dalidakis said.

"While people still want to buy paper and timber products, and whilst wood is still the most economically and environmentally sustainable building product available, the Australian community will need to source wood products from somewhere.

"If it doesn't come from Victoria, there is a strong chance the timber is coming from the rainforests of Sumatra, which is the home of the endangered Orang-utan; or Brazil, where the Amazon is slowly being destroyed at the expense of its countless endangered species and Indigenous peoples.

"Australia, one of the most forested countries in the world, is already running a \$2.1 billion trade deficit in forest products with these and other countries. The Greens policy would just make the imbalance greater."

Mr Dalidakis also criticised the Greens of running a cynical and hypocritical campaign, without offering any real solutions to the problems of ensuring the sustainable use of Victoria's forests.

"The Greens answer is plantations, which they believe the industry can transition into immediately," Mr Dalidakis said.

"However, current plantation-grown timbers cannot replace the timber from native forests and any attempt to establish plantations to just replace the sawlog quality timber from the Melbourne catchment would need an additional 21,000 hectares of land in East Gippsland, \$170 million of investment, and at least 30 years for the trees to grow.

"At the same time, however, they are fighting against the development of new plantations, with Greens Senator Christine Milne claiming plantations are destroying



VAFI

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES

communities; and as recently as the 24th of October this year, the Victorian Greens' website featured policies aimed at ending Managed Investment Schemes for plantation development and closing plantations in water catchment areas.

"It's time the Greens grew up and started developing real policies with real environmental outcomes, and stopped making others pay for their policies that will only shift forestry from our backyard to the Amazon."

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